

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims reflects all claim amendments and replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Material to be inserted is in **bold and underline**, and material to be deleted is in ~~strikeout~~ or (if the deletion is of five or fewer consecutive characters or would be difficult to see) in double brackets [[]].

1. (Canceled)

2-5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently amended) **An instrument for aligning a collimated x-ray beam relative to an x-ray film and a target tooth of an animal patient to produce dental radiographs in accordance with the bisecting-angle technique, wherein the instrument is configured to align a longitudinal axis of the x-ray beam orthogonal to a bisecting plane lying approximately midway between a target plane defined by the target tooth and an x-ray film plane defined by the x-ray film, comprising:**

a first handle selectively orientable at a first known angle relative to the x-ray film plane;

a second handle selectively orientable at a second known angle relative to the target plane, wherein orientation of the handles is correlated to alignment of the longitudinal axis of the x-ray beam, wherein the first handle is orientable parallel to the x-ray film plane and the second handle is orientable parallel to the

target plane, and wherein the second handle is pivotally attached to the first handle to form a variable angle between the handles to selectively orient the second handle parallel to the target plane; and

~~an instrument as recited in claim 5, including~~ a bisecting member attached to the handles, wherein the bisecting member is oriented substantially parallel to the bisecting plane when the first handle is oriented parallel to the x-ray film plane and the second handle is oriented parallel to the target plane.

7. (Original) An instrument as recited in claim 6, wherein the bisecting member is attached to the handles by a pair of rigid coupling members and wherein an equal length of each coupling member separates the bisecting member from the handles.

8. (Original) An instrument as recited in claim 7, wherein each coupling member is pivotally attached to one of handles, and wherein the coupling members are pivotally attached to the bisecting member and to each other.

9. (Original) An instrument as recited in claim 6, including an x-ray alignment assembly attached to the bisecting member and configured to align an x-ray collimator.

10. (Original) An instrument as recited in claim 9, wherein the x-ray alignment assembly includes a first end portion attached to the bisecting member, and a second end portion configured to engage a targeting ring for aligning the x-ray collimator.

11. (Original) An instrument as recited in claim 10, wherein the first end portion is attached substantially orthogonally to the bisecting member, and wherein the second end portion is aligned substantially parallel to the bisecting plane when the first handle is oriented parallel to the x-ray film plane and the second handle is oriented parallel to the target plane.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently amended) An instrument for aligning a collimated x-ray beam relative to an x-ray film and a target tooth of an animal patient to produce dental radiographs in accordance with the bisecting-angle technique, wherein the instrument is configured to align a longitudinal axis of the x-ray beam orthogonal to a bisecting plane lying approximately midway between a target plane defined by the target tooth and an x-ray film plane defined by the x-ray film, comprising:

a first handle selectively orientable at a first known angle relative to the x-ray film plane;

a second handle selectively orientable at a second known angle relative to the target plane, and wherein orientation of the handles is correlated to alignment of the longitudinal axis of the x-ray beam, wherein the first handle is attachable to a film holder configured to selectively hold the x-ray film against the target tooth;
and

~~an instrument as recited in claim 12, further comprising a film holder support including a first support member for selectively engaging and supporting the film holder, a second support member spaced apart from the first support member for engaging one or more non-target teeth, and a connecting member coupling the support members and allowing distance between the support members to be selectively varied and held fixed.~~

14-25. (Canceled)

26. (Currently amended) A method of aligning an x-ray beam to produce dental radiographs of a target tooth of an animal patient in accordance with the bisecting-angle technique, wherein an alignment instrument is configured to align a longitudinal axis of the x-ray beam orthogonal to a bisecting plane lying approximately midway between a target plane defined by the target tooth and an x-ray film plane defined by the x-ray film, comprising:

placing an x-ray film into the patient's mouth;

attaching the alignment instrument to the x-ray film;

orienting a first handle of the alignment instrument at a first known angle relative to the x-ray film plane; and

orienting a second handle of the alignment instrument at a second known angle relative to the target plane

wherein the steps of orienting the first handle and second handle further orient a reference portion of the alignment instrument at a known reference angle

relative to the bisecting plane, and wherein the reference portion is configured to align the longitudinal axis of the x-ray beam at an alignment angle relative to the reference portion and correlated to the reference angle, wherein the first and second angles are both substantially zero, so that the first handle of the instrument is oriented substantially parallel to the x-ray film plane and the second handle of the instrument is oriented substantially parallel to the target plane, and

~~a method as recited in claim 10,~~ wherein the reference portion is a bisecting member attached to the handles, and wherein the bisecting member is oriented substantially parallel to the bisecting plane when the first handle is oriented substantially parallel to the x-ray film plane and the second handle is oriented substantially parallel to the target plane.

27. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 26, wherein attaching the instrument to the film includes attaching the first handle to a film holder engaged with the film.

28. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 27, wherein orienting the second handle with the target plane includes pivoting the second handle relative to the first handle.

29. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 26, wherein orienting the second handle includes placing a guiding member attached to the second handle

against the target tooth, and orienting the guiding member to point in a desired direction with respect to the tooth.

30. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 29, wherein the guiding member is selectively extendable along an axis of the second handle.

31. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 26, wherein the bisecting member is configured to align an x-ray head targeting ring parallel to the bisecting plane when the bisecting member is oriented substantially parallel to the bisecting plane.

32. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 26, further comprising holding the x-ray film in place with a compressive force communicated from one or more non-target teeth through a connecting member to the x-ray film.

33-34 (Canceled)

35. (Previously presented) An instrument as recited in claim 10, wherein the first end portion is slidably engaged with the bisecting member allowing motion of the x-ray alignment assembly along the longitudinal axis of the x-ray beam.